



*“Offering our community more than a home”*

## Open Market Purchases Policy

Management Committee submission:	12 May 2020
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### CHA Objectives:

- To provide quality, affordable housing that meets the changing needs of our customers and to ensure fair access to housing within our area.
- To manage the houses provided, in a professional and cost effective manner, for the benefit of our local community and the environment.
- To ensure that our resources are adequate to deliver our objectives by investing in our people, demonstrating value for money and through robust procurement practices.
- To promote social inclusion by applying principles of equality and diversity to everything we do.

### Regulatory Standards:

- The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.
- The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these objectives.
- The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay.
- The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.
- The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.

**Any breach or non-compliance with legislation/regulatory requirements in relation to this Policy constitutes a Notifiable Event and the Regulator will be informed via the SHR Portal.**

***This policy can be made available on request in a variety of different formats, such as on CD, in large print and translated into other languages.***

## **POLICY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

**This policy has been developed to set out the guidelines of Clydebank Housing Association (CHA) in relation to open market property transactions. Acquiring additional homes in line with budget demonstrates value for money in terms of delivering homes at affordable rent levels, whilst ensuring the close monitoring of overall costs.**

## **BACKGROUND OVERVIEW**

Grant funding continues to be in high demand and although we continue to be a developing organisation, continuing our Open Market Purchase Policy on a case by case basis, would ensure that we can take advantage of other growth opportunities as they arise.

Furthermore, although the Right to Buy scheme (RTB) ended in Scotland from 1 August 2016, the Association lost over 150 units through the scheme and therefore any opportunities for reasonable and viable replacements are welcomed.

In order to alleviate the impact of lost properties up until now, the Association has been participating in the Mortgage to Rent Scheme (MTR) whereby the Association has purchased properties from owners who are in danger of losing their homes, enabling them to remain in them as tenants. The scheme is grant funded by the Scottish Government with the grant subsidy dependent on the size of the property. CHA also operates a Shared Ownership Buy Back Policy for sharing owners who are experiencing financial hardship.

It has already been recognised that the Association has an oversupply of 2-bedroomed properties at the Multi-storey flats and this, in addition to allocation restrictions at these flats has led to mid-market rent options as well as options on an affordable rented basis being historically explored.

Furthermore, West Dunbartonshire Council's Local Housing Strategy (LHS 2017-2022) highlighted a range of factors which have led to an increased demand for rented accommodation in both social and private sectors, including the economic downturn, difficulty in accessing mortgage finance and the number of households significantly growing due to a projected large increase in single person households in the next 25 years.

## **POLICY PURPOSE**

The main purpose of the Open Market Purchase Policy is to assist with the issues outlined above by purchasing both former RTB properties and private dwelling houses on the open market for social rented housing supply. The Policy is intended to complement our MTR and Shared Ownership Buy Back Policies by replacing stock lost previously through the RTB. Its aim will be to increase our stock and in particular, one-bedroomed properties where our demand remains greatest. Furthermore, as we have lost a considerable amount of 3 and 4 bedroomed stock through the Right to Buy and there remains a healthy demand for these property sizes (per waiting list statistics) and an extremely low turnover, they will also be considered under this Policy.

## **Benefits**

- Replaces properties previously lost through right to buy and addresses demand
- Increases supply of one-bedroomed properties (MTR properties generally larger accommodation)
- Contributes to meeting demand and alleviating pressure on waiting list
- Vacant possession
- Improved management and maintenance of former RTB flatted properties where CHA retains an interest as purchase may place CHA as majority landlord
- Can take advantage of “flat” market and current low market values/asking prices
- May assist with reducing number of empty homes where owners are unable to sell

## **Risks**

- Financial viability – ensure rental income from property repays net capital cost and contributes to future management maintenance costs over the longer term. Any property purchase should not be confirmed until the Management Committee have considered budget considerations and the Association must demonstrate that it places importance on strong financial health and robust financial controls
- Ensure allocation of funds and potential purchases considered in context with overall financial plans
- The property should be assessed to ensure that it is SHQS/ESSH and ESSH2 compliant and if not, any costs relative to compliance to be included in financial assessment
- Purchasing properties with low demand
- Potential Housing Management/Maintenance issues in shared blocks/schemes where CHA has no interest

## **PROCEDURE**

Purchases will only be considered if the agreed Budget allows

- 1) Properties will either be identified on the open market or upon request from owner(s) to take vacant possession
- 2) The Association will carry out a physical inspection of the property and report back on any repairs required and estimated costs thereof.
- 3) All potential purchases will be considered on an individual basis and there is no guarantee that CHA will proceed with a purchase
- 4) Only those properties within the Association’s geographical area of operation will be considered
- 5) Priority will be given to one-bedroomed properties, however, larger properties especially those already within our flatted stock may also be prioritised for improved management and maintenance purposes
- 6) It will be determined by both housing management and maintenance departments whether there could be potential management problems following purchase
- 7) Spread sheet – demonstrate that CHA can recover net capital cost (after RTB proceeds deduction) as well as management and maintenance costs from rent within 30 year period
- 8) Price offered will be based on home report and condition of property

- 9) Ultimate decision will be dependent on availability of cash funds and forthcoming financial plans

### **Criteria for purchases**

- 1) Evidence to be provided demonstrating that the property is on the market
- 2) Maximum price per property should be based on the home report valuation and amended to take account of condition of the property, rental potential and long-term financial assessment. The price should not exceed the amount required to ensure repayment of capital and management and maintenance costs – surplus by year 30
- 3) Home report to be made available to CHA
- 4) Only one, three and four- bedroomed properties will be considered

### **DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

The Chief Executive and the Head of Finance and Corporate Services have been delegated authority to negotiate, progress and complete purchases within the confines of the Policy. Full reports/updates to be provided to the Management Committee on a monthly basis.

### **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years. The review will take account of legislative changes, new policy guidance, and changes in economic and social climate, best practice advice, and the performance of the Association in delivering its objectives.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Our commitment to equal opportunities and fairness will apply irrespective of factors such as race, sex, disability, age, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out in conjunction with the preparation of this policy. It is deemed that this policy will not unduly affect any person(s) with the above mentioned characteristics.

### **For Office Use Only – Actions**

Customer Consultation Required/Arranged	No
Intranet Update	Yes
F Drive Update	Yes
Website Update	Yes
Leaflet change required?	No
Newsletter Promotion?	No
Other information updated, e.g. posters, automatic email responses, post cards, answering machine messages, etc.	No
Equality Impact Assessment completed	Yes
Policy Declarations signed by staff	N/A